

10.31.22

City of Chicago Office of the Mayor
121 North La Salle Street Chicago,
IL 60602

To Whom It May Concern,

In March 2020, the rapid spread of COVID-19 triggered a series of stay-at-home orders in Chicago, Illinois and across the world, a public health and safety measure aimed at stemming the spread of the virus. In Illinois, residents were encouraged to shelter-in-place unless they were deemed an essential worker—those who held jobs in critical sectors like healthcare, first-responders, grocery, government, and transportation. As businesses transitioned to remote-work environments, essential workers were thrust to the front lines and forced to continue commuting to work to perform their duties, returning home to their families despite the obvious risk to their health.

In Chicago, more than half of essential workers are people of color and reside in low-income neighborhoods.¹ The division between remote workers and essential workers held a mirror to the existing socio-economic divides in our society. Yet, this is one example of how a history of discrimination in the labor market led to outcomes that disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color. More broadly, economic impacts due to the loss of a job and/or work-related income will have long-lasting effects in communities of color. As the eviction moratorium was lifted, the rate of eviction filings increased the most in communities of color.² Lower accumulation of wealth in communities of color prior to the pandemic, coupled with loss of income and assets allows disparities to persist.

In the midst of these challenges, the Lightfoot Administration had to (a) meet planning requirements of the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development; and (b) advance broader planning goals to address racial equity concerns in the City of Chicago. Recent major planning efforts such as Invest South/West, Chicago Recovery Plan, the Blueprint for Fair Housing, and We Will Chicago all address, in various capacities and from various angles, social and economic inequity.

We Will Chicago, the City's first comprehensive plan in decades, is particularly important as a longstanding anchoring document, directing investments, priorities, and goals for the City. In order for this plan to be most impactful, it must integrate the goals and efforts of these other related plans. To create an infrastructure for a more just and inclusive City, existing strategies for advancing equity must be reflected, further fleshed out, and fully invested in We Will.

On February 17, 2022, the City of Chicago released its final *Blueprint for Fair Housing (The Blueprint)*; this plan was part of a broader, Cook County Regional Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), undertaken as mandated by HUD's rule on Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing. This planning process included 19 local governments and housing authorities, in addition to contractors, community-based grantees, and an advisory committee of experts, and was aimed at assessing and addressing the underlying causes of

¹ [https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/updates/all/-/asset_publisher/UIMfSLnFfMB6/content/metropolitan-chicago-essential-workers-disproportionately-low-income-people-ofcolor#:~:text=More%20than%20half%20\(54.1%20percent,service%20occupations%20\(38.1%20percent\).](https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/updates/all/-/asset_publisher/UIMfSLnFfMB6/content/metropolitan-chicago-essential-workers-disproportionately-low-income-people-ofcolor#:~:text=More%20than%20half%20(54.1%20percent,service%20occupations%20(38.1%20percent).)

² <https://eviction.lcbh.org/geography/type/ca>

the region's residential segregation and related fair housing issues. Importantly, the Blueprint, rooted in robust community engagement to identify housing issues and solutions, outlines 8 core goals, each with a set of strategies to advance housing opportunity and equity in Chicago.

As members of the AFH Advisory Committee, we strongly believe that this existing document (the Blueprint) must serve as a foundation underpinning the We Will Chicago Plan and providing direction for We Will's housing related goals and policy priorities. The draft We Will Chicago Plan landing page includes a Policy Ideas document that was developed through community engagement; this document contains many proposals that align with The Blueprint's existing goals and strategies. **In the attached matrix, we identify these key areas of overlap. It is our intent to uplift policy areas that should be prioritized and memorialized within the final We Will Chicago Plan.** The goals are pulled directly from The Blueprint and under each goal, we connect high priority Blueprint strategies to We Will policy ideas. **We urge the City to incorporate these strategies into the final published and adopted We Will Chicago Plan.**

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Access Living
Business and Professional People for the Public Interested (BPI)
Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance
Chicago Urban League
Connections for the Homeless
Enterprise Community Partners
HOPE Fair Housing Center
Housing Opportunities and Maintenance for the Elderly (HOME)
Legal Aid Chicago
Metropolitan Planning Council
Metropolitan Tenants Organization
Northside Community Resources
Northwest Compass
Open Communities
Oak Park Regional Housing Center
South Suburban Housing Center
Supportive Housing Providers Association (SHPA)
Working Family Solidarity
Zillow

BLUEPRINT GOAL	BLUEPRINT STRATEGY	WE WILL PILLAR	WE WILL GOAL	SECT	WE WILL POLICY IDEA
GOAL 1: Increase and preserve affordable, accessible housing options	Increase the stock of affordable, accessible rental housing throughout the region, especially in areas of opportunity (with a long-term goal of at least 10% of rental stock legally restricted affordable in each community area.) Generate dedicated revenues for affordable housing programs (with an increase of 25% in sustainable local funding within 5 years.) Increase deeply affordable housing options. (Expand City-supported stock of affordable housing for households at 30% AMI or below by 33%)	HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS	GOAL 1: Preserve and increase affordable, quality and accessible housing choices for all	1.1.B	Increase programs and funding support to maintain and improve existing naturally occurring affordable housing like 2-4 flats and smaller apartment buildings
				1.1.D	Partner with and provide additional funding to Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) to expand purchase and rehabilitation programs citywide to ensure affordability over the long term
				1.2.B	Expand the Additional Dwelling Units (ADU) pilot program citywide, expand funding through the Neighborhood Lending Program or other sources, and educate homeowners about the program
				1.3.F	Build on the Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Preservation Ordinance and the 2022 SRO Loan Fund to preserve and rehabilitate SRO units, which are a critical housing option for low-income residents
			GOAL 3: Attract and retain residents and increase density to strengthen neighborhood vibrancy, especially on the South and West Sides.	3.1.C	Promote housing diversity and affordability by reforming exclusionary single-family only zoning practices
				3.2.B	Prioritize transit-oriented development as criteria in City incentive programs and the capital infrastructure budget
GOAL 2: Prevent involuntary displacement and stabilize neighborhoods	Establish a pilot “right to counsel” in eviction court program. Support state legislation on eviction sealing and screening protections. With leadership guidance from the Mayor’s Office, establish a proactive rental inspection program at a scale that is enforceable so that renters are not evicted for demanding code compliance.	HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS	GOAL 1: Preserve and increase affordable, quality and accessible housing choices for all	1.1.C	Establish and adequately resource predictive and proactive residential inspection programs using data from 311 calls, utility and property tax delinquencies, and other indicators to prevent housing from going into a state of disrepair, so that residents are protected from environmental health hazards and small housing owners are supported in making necessary upgrades
			GOAL 2: Prevent Chicagoans from being involuntarily displaced, especially those that have been historically marginalized	2.3.C	Enact eviction protections to protect marginalized tenants from eviction without cause, especially Black and Latino tenants, who are at the highest risk of eviction
				2.3.D	Permanently increase resources for tenant supports, such as through an Office of Tenant Advocate or similar structure, to provide early assistance, and also legal aid through universal right to counsel or a dedicated City department providing legal counsel
			GOAL 3: Attract and retain residents and increase density to strengthen neighborhood vibrancy, especially on the South and West Sides.	3.3.A	Evaluate City-owned vacant land and identify priorities for parcels: community open space (including community gardens), residential, commercial/mixed-use.
				3.3.B	Create user-friendly and transparent public portal identifying available City and Cook County Land Bank Authority land.
				3.3.D	Prioritize neighborhood residents, local developers and community organizations (including collective ownership models) in transferring City owned land.
			GOAL 5: Make infrastructure, physical spaces and services safe, beautiful and accessible to the aspirations and cultures of communities.	5.2.A	Sustain a publicly-funded workforce to beautify and manage vacant city-owned and Cook County Land Bank properties prior to private ownership.

GOAL 3: Increase Opportunities and Community Integration for People with Disabilities	Create robust region-wide modification fund for home modifications for people with disabilities.	HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS	GOAL 1: Preserve and increase affordable, quality and accessible housing choices for all	1.3.C	Develop centralized, user-friendly public database and waitlist for publicly-funded affordable housing units, including units that are accessible to people with disabilities
	Ensure developers who receive federal funding include 10% units accessible using UFAS standards (or stricter) to people with physical disabilities and 4% accessible to people with sensory disabilities (Create a model where MOPD is leading this work to ensure compliance per federal funding.)			1.4.B	Expand funding for lower-income renters and homeowners to make accessibility improvements to their units when needed.
	Create an equitable infrastructure improvement program that invests in areas of greatest need (e.g. like inaccessible public facilities, sidewalks and public transit) with the most impacted (Convene interdepartmental work group to develop equitable process and metrics to guide capital bill infrastructure investments).			1.4.C	Incentivize property owners to rehabilitate rental units to make them accessible to residents with disabilities.
				1.4.D	Audit existing publicly-funded affordable housing and homeless shelters to evaluate accessibility and develop funding streams to assist with rehabilitation.
		TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE	GOAL 1: Ensure the city’s transportation networks and infrastructure systems are safe, equitable and accessible for all.	1.1.C	Formalize a program of data metrics and performance standards for use by all City departments, wards, and partner agencies to evaluate, implement, and monitor transportation and infrastructure projects prioritizing equity, safety, accessibility, and sustainability
				1.1.D	Update the City’s Complete Streets guidelines to ensure use of industry best practices and most effective design elements focused on safety, comfort, and accessibility
			GOAL 2: Create transportation networks that support greater connectivity by active and sustainable options such as walking, public transit biking and other methods that do not require car ownership	2.4.B	Prepare an annual accountability report documenting sidewalk conditions and accessibility improvements
GOAL 4: Address the Segregation of Opportunity/Inequitable Resource Distribution.	Prioritize public investments in communities that have experienced underinvestment.	CIVIC & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	GOAL 2: Increase public access and participation in civic and democratic processes	2.1.D	Establish ward-level participatory budgeting standards and expand the adoption of inclusive participatory budgeting in every ward.
	Address the jobs/housing mismatch by investing in meaningful job opportunities and small business development in areas with high unemployment rates and in racially or ethnically concentrated areas of poverty (R/ECAPs).		GOAL 5: Ensure equity, community engagement and historical reckoning drive public decision-making	5.1.C	Explore alternative structures to equitably include neighborhood representatives in decision making processes. (i.e., Ward-based Community Development Advisory Councils, community tables, remapping processes, etc.).
	Provide reliable, frequent, and affordable access to multiple transportation options to populations disproportionately reliant on public transportation (In partnership with CTA, produce better bus policy plan with related guidance and tools.)			5.1.D	Establish standard scorecards, co-created with community members, for evaluating development proposals to inform decision making and enhance transparency.

			ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE & ENERGY	GOAL 4: Maintain and expand green space, natural resources, and conservation efforts for the benefit of all Chicagoans	4.2.A	Create a strategy for cross-agency collaboration to acquire publicly available land for conservation purposes to fill gaps in the public open space network throughout the City.
					4.2.F	Assign a value to open space in neighborhoods so that it can be effectively prioritized within a development market and to incentivize the creation of open space in underserved neighborhoods
			HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS	GOAL 3: Attract and retain residents and increase density to strengthen neighborhood vibrancy, especially on the South and West Sides.	3.5.A	Systematically evaluate infrastructure and public amenities in neighborhoods to identify what is missing and where to prioritize city staff time and investment
					3.5.C	Ensure every community has accessible, safe and activated spaces to gather, including parks, community centers, libraries, youth centers, artist hubs, and health centers
					3.5.D	Expand programs like the Public Outdoor Plazas program to create more community-controlled public gathering spaces
			PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY	GOAL 3: Establish and maintain the necessary governmental public health and emergency management capacity, staff and infrastructure, and change community conditions to eliminate health inequities and respond to public health emergencies	3.2.B	Fund and support the establishment of health-centered community centers in high-need neighborhoods to link people to health-supporting government and community programs
					3.2.E	Reform Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to require health equity considerations in all funding decisions and make TIF a driver of health equity
					3.4.B	Support the development, function, funding, and sustainability of urban farms and agriculture, community gardening, and permaculture through making city-owned land available and making water accessible
			TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE	GOAL 2: Create transportation networks that support greater connectivity by active and sustainable options such as walking, public transit biking and other methods that do not require car ownership	2.3.A	Work with the RTA, CTA, Pace, Metra, CMAP, and City Departments to develop and implement programs expanding transit access and affordability to more Chicagoans through coordination of projects, fare initiatives, schedules, and transfers
GOAL 5: Enhance Housing Policies and Programs to Increase Fair Housing Choice	Continue to support mobility programs and housing locator assistance.		CIVIC & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	GOAL 2: Increase public access and participation in civic and democratic processes	2.2.E	Work with City departments and sister agencies to ensure and track that underrepresented residents and/or identities are included in decision making boards, like public commissions and governing boards (e.g. Housing Choice Voucher holders on CHA Board)
	Increase education and outreach for voucher holders to ensure participants are better equipped for housing searches		HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS	GOAL 1: Preserve and increase affordable, quality and accessible housing choices for all	1.3.B	Ensure housing choice voucher holders can obtain housing by partnering with Chicago Housing Authority to educate housing providers, including providing technology upgrades, and increasing enforcement against discrimination
	Utilize HUD-designated Qualified Fair Housing Organizations to provide training and education.					

GOAL 6: Expand Fair Housing Outreach, Education, and Enforcement.	Increase investigative and enforcement staff of Chicago Human Relations Commission.	HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS	GOAL 1: Preserve and increase affordable, quality and accessible housing choices for all	1.3.A	Increase accessible, culturally relevant education campaigns for residents around housing rights and how to access housing support
	1.3.B			Ensure housing choice voucher holders can obtain housing by partnering with Chicago Housing Authority to educate housing providers, including providing technology upgrades, and increasing enforcement against discrimination	
GOAL 7: Preserve existing and expand affordable homeownership	Subsidize affordable homeownership opportunities.	HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS	GOAL 2: Prevent Chicagoans from being involuntarily displaced, especially those that have been historically marginalized	2.1.C	Increase subsidies for homeownership for low- and moderate income residents.
	Study property tax freeze programs for low-income owners facing rapid property tax increases to prevent displacement.			2.1.D	Support innovative models of homeownership such as limited equity housing cooperatives, community land trusts and the Chicago Housing Authority’s Choose to Own program through subsidies, technical assistance and partnerships.
	Home repairs and rehabilitation for qualifying owners.			2.1.E	Work with appraisal industry to reduce barriers to entry and increase diversity among appraisers, increase public input on appraisal standards and criteria, and require fair housing training for appraisers
				2.2.D	Expand Chicago Housing Trust and support creation of local community land trusts.
				2.3.A	Work with county and other public agencies to expand property tax and utility relief programs for low- and moderate-income homeowners and renters, and small businesses
GOAL 8: Ensure that internal policies and practices advance equity and address history of structural racism.	Pilot or expand the usage of equity assessments in city policy and program development.	CIVIC & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	GOAL 5: Ensure equity, community engagement and historical reckoning drive public decision-making	5.3.A and 5.3.B	Apply health, racial equity, and climate impact tools, when appropriate, in the development and introduction of ordinances and/or as a means of ongoing reform to existing programs and policies; and Institutionalize analysis and assessment of health, racial equity and/or climate impacts into relevant public decision-making, such as budgeting, permitting or legislative processes.
	Address NIMBYism and lack of political will to create affordable, accessible housing at the scale needed.			5.3.C	Require City departments and sister agencies to create, maintain and report progress on Racial Equity Action Plans.
	Develop standardized tools to assess racial and social equity impacts in capital planning and budget processes.			5.3.D	Institutionalize the Office of Equity and Racial Justice and empower them to coordinate equity plans, usage of tools, and ensure accountability across City government.
		ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE & ENERGY	GOAL 1: Prioritize climate resiliency efforts in Black and Latino community areas and for low-income individuals through both public- and private sector efforts	1.3.B	Partner with public and private sectors to effectively manage, monitor and communicate air, land and water quality to protect human and ecosystem health.
				1.4.C	Define a process to penalize harmful corporate practices and programs as a way to provide accountability and safety for communities.
				GOAL 2: Use environmental justice principles to establish criteria and policies for geographies harmed by environmental degradation	2.1.B